



Commission Action

May 7, 2020

PROJECT Modification of General Development Plan, Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion Rock Creek Stream Valley Park Unit 1 North Chevy Chase, MD	NCPC FILE NUMBER MP100
SUBMITTED BY Montgomery County Department of Parks	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 76.21.01(05.00)45058
REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1) and 46 Stat. 482	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans
	ACTION TAKEN Approved preliminary and final site and building plans with comments

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for a pavilion over riding Ring C and ancillary site development improvements to include additional landscaping, two new bioswales, a new walkway, and a new horse/pedestrian path between the internal access road and Ring C. The existing fencing surrounding the current ring would be removed, with new fencing installed inside the pavilion.

Notes that Meadowbrook Stables is a non-profit equestrian facility, which offers lessons to all levels of riders as well as boarding, leasing, summer camp, and horse shows. The facility has been in operation within the Rock Creek Park since 1934, and the existing barn is considered historic by the Maryland Historic Trust and Montgomery County.

Notes the revenue from the lessons, boarding, leasing, camp, and horse shows supports the stable operations and allows for the greater public benefit of learning about and viewing horses within the park, in addition to opportunities for need-based scholarships.

Park-Related Use Under the 1930 Capper-Cramton Act

Finds the addition of a pavilion over riding Ring C at Meadowbrook Stables constitutes a park-related use with benefits for both the public and horses as it would bring the facility up to current recommended standards of exercise and horse care, enhancing the user experience, and improving overall stable operations.

Notes the facility has four outdoor riding rings (Rings A-D) and the Commission previously approved a 2003 modification to the General Development Plan that enabled comprehensive development of Meadowbrook Stables. The approval noted that a new pavilion would be submitted to NCPC as a modification to the general development plan in the future.

Notes the applicant has stated a pavilion over Ring C would address the need for safe exercise and training space when inclement weather conditions and unsafe horse footing conditions exist, allowing many of the stable operations to continue. It would allow continued operations during rain, thunder, and high winds. Saturated riding rings from such weather events have the following specific impact on stable operations:

- Horses are kept indoors and cannot get exercise.
- Private lessons and horse shows are canceled – resulting in immediate revenue loss.
- Group lessons are moved into a classroom setting and while there is no immediate revenue loss, horses do not get exercise and riders cannot train with the horses.

Notes the applicant has stated the goal of the pavilion is to improve current operations – not expand operations.

Location of the Pavilion

Notes that the Montgomery County Department of Parks and Meadowbrook identified a new pavilion over Ring D in 2003 as the preferable location; however, upon more recent review of the site options, Montgomery Parks concluded that Ring C is the preferred location due to its greater distance from Rock Creek and minimal site grading to accommodate the new structure and rideable area.

Notes Meadowbrook has concurred with this finding as a pavilion over Ring C would maximize safe rider training, horse exercise and welfare due to the amount of rideable area. Specifically, it offers 30% more all-weather potential arena space than Ring D (25,875 SF compared to a 20,000 SF Ring D arena) allowing two user groups to operate simultaneously. It would also allow continued horse turn-out space in Rings A, B, and D for reasons described in this report.

Proposed Design

Notes the submitted plans show the new structure with a length of 225-feet, width of 125-feet, and a sloped rooftop between 16- and 32-feet high, with a top height (center cupola) of 41-feet, 8 inches. The pavilion would cover 28,125 square feet of Ring C, and the remaining 31,875 square feet would be used for landscape, stormwater management, and site access improvements.

Notes that the pavilion would be constructed with an architecturally compatible design to other Meadowbrook Stables structures with a metal standing-seam roof; cupolas; sides constructed with a stone skirt at each of the building corners; trim around the windows and doors; board-and-batten style siding, and historic exterior light fixtures.

Finds the proposed size and scale of the new pavilion to be appropriate for the following reasons:

- The size can accommodate twice as many lesson groups and a broader range of activities during heavy rain and periods of saturation - whether it be horse exercise time or lessons.

- The interior space of the structure would allow for horse jumping activities, a key part of many more advanced lessons.

Environmental Impacts

Notes that NCPC developed an Environmental Assessment to analyze potential project impacts to floodplains, stormwater management/water quality, visual resources, and cultural resources. The analysis evaluated both federal and state regulations/guidance.

- Floodplains – The pavilion is located entirely within the 100-year floodplain (as is the majority of Meadowbrook Stables); however, the project would not impact the floodplain based on a report prepared for the Maryland Department of the Environment, and is consistent with guidance in Federal Executive Order 11988. It is designed to minimize potential harm to or within the floodplain, with retractable side doors and no “critical” functions within the structure;
- Stormwater Management/Water Quality – The pavilion would meet all Maryland Department of the Environment requirements on-site through bioswales, with enough capacity to capture and filter stormwater from the roof through plantings and infiltration media;
- Visual Resources - The pavilion would be largely visible from the six closest residences along Abilene Drive, as well as nearby ground-level vantage points along Rock Creek Trail and Meadowbrook Lane. The views of Ring C would change from that of an open sand riding ring with twenty adjacent 40’ floodlights to views of the pavilion facades and rooftop, with trees and other landscaping around the site. Views of horse activity in Ring C would be limited to lower ground views along the Rock Creek Trail and Meadowbrook Lane through operable doors. Significant landscaping and project design compatibility with the historic barn would help to mitigate the change in view; however, the pavilion will still be visible from these residences and the trail surrounding the stables;
- Cultural Resources – The Maryland Historic Trust concurred with Meadowbrook and NCPC that the project will have a “no adverse effect” on historic properties with its location outside of the historic barn setting.

Notes that M-NCPPC and NCPC have received a significant number of public comments, both for and against the project. All public comments directed to NCPC are included in the Appendix of this report.

General Comments

Recommends that the Montgomery County Department of Parks and Meadowbrook continue to work with the local community to address on-going facility operations.

Notes that the Montgomery County Department of Parks will need to submit project plans for review and permitting by the Montgomery Department of Permitting Services and other permitting agencies following final approval from NCPC and prior to initiating construction activities.

Adopts the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the project based on its assessment of potential future project impacts to the natural and manmade environment and proposed mitigation pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.

 05/08/20

Julia A. Koster
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

